Elihu Yale (1703–1745)

Origin and Family

Born May 25, 1703. Died Dec 31, 1745, age 42.

Father: Capt. Theophilus Yale (1675–1760)
Mother: Sarah Street (c. 1681–1784)
Spouse: 1st to Mary Ives (1702–1731); 2nd Judith Howe (1732–)

Children[1]
by Mary Ives:
1. Titus Yale (1727–)
2. Elihu Yale (1729–)

by Judith Howe:
3. Stephen Yale (1732–)
4. Mary Yale (1736–)
5. Sarah Yale (1738–)
6. Elisha Yale (1742–1825)

From Rodney Horace Yale[1]: “Elihu Yale, of Wallingford, Conn., was twice married; first, to Mary Ives, by Capt. Thomas Yale, October 1st, 1726, second, to Judith Howe, January 19th, 1732.”

Occupation and Property

He was a farmer in Wallingford, Conn. Records indicate that Elihu Yale carried significant indebtedness during his later life, including an estate obligation settled after his death in the amount of 69 pounds, 17s, 4d. The origin of this debt is not clearly documented, but it was likely consistent with the credit-based agricultural economy of colonial Connecticut, in which farmers commonly operated on extended credit for land, equipment, and household provisions, with balances fluctuating seasonally and over multi-year cycles.

Military Service - The 1745 Siege of Louisbourg (aka Louisburg)

The 1745 Siege of Louisbourg at Cape Breton, Nova Scotia pitted the French against Colonial Americans. Despite Ben Franklin’s warning that this fortified town would be a “hard nut to crack”,

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Massachusetts approved a war plan on Feb. 5, 1745, and Connecticut joined the campaign by providing 500 men, including Elihu Yale.

Elihu Yale served in the Connecticut Regiment under the command of Lieutenant General Pepperrell. Elihu's commanding officer was Lieutenant Nathan Whiting, who graduated from Yale College in 1743, and settled in New Haven as a merchant.[3]

Elihu may have joined this expedition out of duty as a member of the Wallingford Train Band. The promise of great plunder and booty may have been a further incentive, along with the passionate sermons about the evils of the Roman Catholic French to the north.

The siege began at the end of May 1745, and six weeks later the French surrendered.

Elihu Yale died at Louisbourg but well after the surrender. "With the fighting over, the troops wanted to go home. They had enlisted for an expedition, not for garrison duty. Nonetheless, more than two thousand men were forced to remain in Louisbourg until relieved the next year by British regulars from Gibraltar."[2]

After having lost only about one hundred men to enemy fire, the New Englanders buried 561 of their number between the end of November and the middle of February. The winter was fierce, and the poorly equipped and clothed soldiers slept on frozen ground without tents and with few provisions. Most died as a result of disease (dysentery) and exposure.[3]

The role list below confirms Elihu Yale's date of death, and also confirms that he was not a fighting soldier – his role was that of a drummer:[3]

"Nathan Whiting's list of Soldiers. 8 1 12 Company
W Smithson Lieu*
Edmund Farchild Set* Dead Jan" 25th
Sam Bayley Ser*
Stephen Lyman Ser*
Isaac Phillips Ser* Dead Febr 4th
Dan Murwin Clark
Dan Smith Cor Advanced Feb ii Serg*
Joe Sperry Cor* Advanced Feb ii* D
Eliphalet Munson Cor* Dead Jan 31st
Elihu Yale Drum' Dead Dec 31st
Nathan Curtis Drum"[3]

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Note the drummer in the image of this colonial re-enactment. Contemporary depictions of Colonial soldiers are often unrealistic, featuring stylized uniforms and fife corps. In reality, provincial troops lacked standardized uniforms and often lacked basic footwear.

This 1755 image depicts the fall of Louisbourg.

Today, the fortress at Louisbourg, Cape Breton has been reconstructed and is a National Historical Park in Nova Scotia, Canada.

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End of Life

Mr. Elihu Yale died at Cape Breton, December 31, 1745, as a result of dysentery or exposure while garrisoning the fort at Louisbourg.

Mrs. Judith Yale, his widow, later married Daniel Dutton, and moved to Waterbury, Conn."[1]

As a soldier who died in the service of the Colony of Connecticut, Elihu did not receive posthumous compensation for his sacrifice. In fact, despite the Yale family local prominence, the Connecticut Public Record issued this demand in October, 1747, causing a significant financial burdenl on his family:

> "Upon the memorial of Judith Yale, administratrix of the estate of Elihu Yale, deceased, shewing this Assembly that the debts due from the estate of the said deceased surmounts the movable estate of said deceased, the sum of 69 pounds, 17s, 4d., and praying liberty to sell so much of the lands of the said deceased to pay said sum with the charges arising thereon, etc.: Resolved by this Assembly, that the said administratrix have liberty to sell so much of the lands of the said deceased taking the advice of the court of New Haven, as to enable said administratrix to pay the sum of 69 pounds, 17s, 4d., with the necessary charges arising thereon."[5]

Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Yale-4
FamilySearch ID: LV1W-PQG
Find a Grave Memorial: 292924043

Further Reading:

- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025
- Yale, Max Brian. *Yale Family Coat of Arms* - Origin and History. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*, 2025
- Wikipedia: Fortress of Louisbourg

References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 63 p. 129

2. Balcom, B.A. "King George's War: Siege of Louisbourg", HistoryNet, 2006.

3. The Hartford Society. "Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society", Volume XIII, 1911

4. Wikipedia: Fortress of Louisbourg

5. Hoadly, Charles J. (Ed). The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (1636-1776) Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1887, Judith Yale

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